

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
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SUBJECT: LABOR CONTAINS SNP, HOLDS GARSCADDEN SEAT

REF: LONDON 5753

1. THE LABOR PARTY RETAINED ITS GLASGOW GARSCADDEN SEAT IN THE APRIL 13 BY-ELECTION BY A COMFORTABLE MARGIN, DEFEATING THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY (SNP) CHALLENGE BY SOME 4,600 VOTES. THE CONSERVATIVES TOO DID WELL, REGAINING ABOUT HALF THE GROUND THEY LOST BETWEEN THE FEBRUARY AND OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THEY REMAINED IN THIRD PLACE.

2. ELECTION RESULTS FOLLOW, WITH COMPARATIVE DATA FROM THE OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION: LABOR, 16,507 VOTES (45.4 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, COMPARED WITH PERCENT IN 1974); SNP, 11,955 VOTES (32.9 PERCENT, COMPARED WITH 31.1 PERCENT IN 1974); CONSERVATIVE, 6,746 VOTES (18.6 PERCENT, COMPARED WITH 12.9 PERCENT IN 1974); THE SCOTTISH LABOR, COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST WORKER PARTIES RECEIVED AN AGGREGATE 1,156 VOTES  
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(3.1 PERCENT, COMPARED WITH 4.9 PERCENT FOR THE LIBERAL IN 1974). THE VOTER TURNOUT WAS ESPECIALLY HIGH FOR A BY-ELECTION, BEING ONLY 1.9 PERCENT DOWN FROM THE OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTION.

3. COMMENT: WHILE CAUTION REMAINS THE KEY WORD IN INTERPRETING BY-ELECTION RESULTS, THE NEAR GENERAL

ELECTION SIZE OF THE GARSCADDEN TURNOUT, THE FACT THAT IT WAS SCOTLAND'S FIRST BY-ELECTION SINCE OCTOBER 1974 AND THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON IT BY THE PARTIES AND THE SCOTTISH MEDIA SUGGEST THAT IT MAY BE A MORE USEFUL INDEX THAN MOST BY-ELECTIONS. THE FOLLOWING POINTS, IN OUR VIEW ARE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT:

-- THE SWING AGAINST LABOR, 3.6 PERCENT, WAS THE SMALLEST REGISTERED IN ANY BY-ELECTION SINCE OCTOBER 1974, IS CLEARLY HEARTENING FOR CALLAGHAN AND LESS THAN EARLIER OBSERVERS HAD EXPECTED (AN APRIL 12 MORI POLL IN GARSCADDEN PREDICTED A SWING OF BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR PERCENT AGAINST LABOR, APPARENTLY CONFIRMING THAT ORGANIZATION'S REPUTATION AS BRITAIN'S MOST RELIABLE IN THE POLITICAL FIELD).

-- ALTHOUGH THE SNP COULD FIND SOME COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT IT REDUCED LABOR'S MARGIN BY 3.6 PERCENT, THE REDUCTION WAS FAR LESS THAN IT HAD ANTICIPATED. FOR EXAMPLE, A SWING OF THAT SIZE WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO GIVE THE SNP THE HAMILTON SEAT. WHILE THE GARSCADDEN RESULT COULD CAUSE THE GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION NOT TO HOLD THE HAMILTON BY-ELECTION BEFORE THE FALL, WE BELIEVE THAT IS UNLIKELY.

-- THE CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE HAS TO BE HEARTENING TO MRS. THATCHER AND THE TORY ANTI-DEVOLUTIONISTS. THIS DEVELOPMENT ALSO TENDS TO CONFIRM THE HYPOTHESIS THAT A LARGE PORTION OF THE DEFECTIONS FROM THE TORIES TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE SNP IN OCTOBER 1974 WERE, IN FACT, TACTICAL VOTERS (REFTEL). THAT MUST BE REASSURING TO CALLAGHAN. IN THE EVENT THE VOTERS WHO RETURNED TO THE TORY FOLD DID NOT DECIDE THE RESULT -- THEY INCREASED LABOR'S MARGIN, BUT WOULD NOT HAVE CHANGED THE OUTCOME IF THEY HAD REMAINED WITH THE SNP.

-- THE DERISORY SCOTTISH LABOR PARTY (SLP) VOTE, 583, WAS A SEVERE BLOW TO THAT PARTY'S HOPES, BUT COMFORTING TO LABOR WHICH HAD FEARED THE SLP MIGHT SERIOUSLY DIVIDE THE TRADITIONAL LABOR VOTE, ALLOWING THE SNP TO SLIP IN. EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN SLP LEADER JIM SILLARS' HOME CONSTITUENCY, AYRSHIRE SOUTH, THE SLP CAN PROBABLY BE WRITTEN OFF AS A POTENTIAL SPOILER IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION.

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## Message Attributes

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